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ZAM-BUK

OUR BLINDED HEROES

It was with great pleasure that I read the report submitted to the Government by the Military Hospitals and Convalescent Homes Commission concerning their work of training and obtaining employment for the returned wounded soldiers, for it is a proof that Canada, although engrossed with other war matters, means to do her utmost to help those who have, and will return, totally unfitted for their former employment. The noble work in which this Commission is engaged deserves the warm support of all Canadians, and it is to be hoped that employment will be readily given to these men when their training is completed. Whilst reading the article I could not help wondering why no mention was made of those who may lose their sight, for although it is true that so far, few have returned to Canada suffering in this way, yet both England and France are in a situation for these heroes, which clearly shows that sooner or later we too, will be faced with the same problem. In London alone the St. Dunstan's Home has considerably over 100 inmates, besides those who have received their training and are now out in the world trying to earn their own living and as so many questions claim the public's attention just now, that nothing can be done hurriedly, I am bringing this subject forward, in order that it may receive consideration before the men are actually in our midst. My object therefore, is not to find fault with what is being done for I think Canada is doing splendidly in every way, but simply to offer a few suggestions which may prove useful to those who will ultimately have to deal with this subject.

In dealing with soldiers who have lost their sight we must not forget that at first everything will seem very strange, and in some cases rather difficult, for by their loss they are being placed in an entirely new position, but with encouragement, and proper training, there is no earthly reason why in time they should not become wholly self-supporting. This training however, is bound to take a rather longer period than that of other wounded soldiers, for they have not only to be taught a trade but also to read and write in Braille, and to a man who has always been accustomed to use his eyes for everything, it requires such patience and concentration before he can become really proficient in either. Some people may wonder why they need to bother with the Braille as it takes up more time, so I will briefly explain what this system is, and how great a benefit it is to all blind people.

Braille, which was invented by a Frenchman of that name, is a system of raised dots which can easily be read by the fingers, and it can be printed by machinery or hand-written. The frame used by individuals is in two parts, the board on which the paper is placed, and the brass ruler which has two lines, each line containing 25 small cells, in each of which can be embossed six little dots. By various combinations of these six dots sixty-three Braille characters can be formed, and in order to facilitate speed, many contractions and abbreviations are used, and as these

signs are employed in nearly all Braille books to decrease their size, it is essential that the men should be given the time to learn them. However, once this system has been mastered by a soldier, his interest in reading can always be kept up, for by joining a library he can obtain all kinds of books, papers and magazines and read for himself without any delay. The writing too, is a great blessing, for it enables a man to correspond more freely especially if he has friends who have also lost their sight and for men in business positions that have considerable memory work, it is a means whereby they can make their own memorandums and so become more self-reliant. I hope that from this little discussion my readers will agree with me that every blinded soldier should be given the opportunity of learning this wonderful Braille system, in order to increase his pleasure, and add to his independence.

Having discussed the subject of Braille reading and writing, we must turn our attention to a still more essential matter, namely the training of the men in whatever branch of work obtaining and suitable for them. The only way to deal adequately with this problem, is as far as possible to study each case individually with this problem is as far as possible to study each case individually, and see that a trade is taught which best suits the capability and social position of the individual. As circumstances alter cases it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules, so I will just mention the trades that have been successfully taught in other institutions opened for blinded soldiers and sailors and leave those in authority to select for themselves what they think most practicable. Many men who before the war were accustomed to rough and heavy kinds of work could be taught such trades as boot and shoe repairing, mat making, carpentry, and brush and basket making. It is brought to such a fine point there are many men of higher ranks who could earn good money by making the more delicate baskets used by florists and other decorating firms. Then again those who enlisted in the West could in many cases return to some form of farm work, for poultry farming, market gardening and fruit farming, have been taught in other countries and the men have proved themselves most efficient in their work. Men possessing a knowledge of engineering are being trained as divers and in places where shipping and repairing are carried on, they should have no difficulty in obtaining employment. Divers possessing their sight have often to do their work under water in the dark, so there is no reason why a fully qualified blind person should not manage the work equally as well. At the present time, too, another occupation which is being taken up by many blind persons is massage, and to prove that they are making a success of it I may mention that one blind officer who has only studied this work since losing his sight at the front, is now in a London hospital as one of the leading masseurs. For men engaged in office work before enlistment, new prospects are also opening, for shorthand and typewriting is being taught not only to our blind all over the United Kingdom and America, and many large firms have proved that blind stenographers can work as quickly and accurately as their sighted companions. Perhaps many of my readers are wondering how such work is possible, so I will briefly compare the two systems.

As before mentioned, the Braille characters are made by various combinations of six little dots, and as a machine has been brought out by means of which any number of these six dots can be written simultaneously, that it will follow this in the first place will facilitate speed. The phonetic outlining is based upon the same principles in both systems, but for words or parts of words different combinations of dots are used instead of, as in ordinary shorthand, strokes and marks made with a pencil. For phrases too, the smallest number of characters possible are used, for instance, three P's stand for "by return of post without fail" and as there are a large number of similar abbreviations it will easily be clear that when a person has mastered this system and become thoroughly used to his machine, his speed will equal that of any seeing competitors.

With regard to typewriting, almost any machine can be used by a blind person, though some are more easily and quickly learned than others, but with constant practice speed and recitancy will, in a short time, be the pleasing result. There are no insurmountable difficulties connected with tabulating, if the man taking up stenography in all its details are only given sufficient time to properly learn the subject from those who are really competent to teach them. Perhaps to some people, the trades and employments about which I have been speaking sound a little far-fetched or impossible, but I can assure my readers that in places where these industries have been tried to blind people of average intelligence none have presented difficulties which in time have not been overcome.

Before closing I want just to say a word about the employment of these men when their training is completed. Many employers are showing their patriotism by taking on, or promising to do so, many soldiers who have been wounded in other ways but I do want to urge that when our men who have lost their sight apply for work they may also be given a trial or the time and money spent on their training will be of no avail. My object in touching on this question of employment is to impress upon people that education for the blind is nowadays considered as great a matter of importance as it is for seeing people, and that being the case when a fully qualified blind person applies for a position it hardly seems right that they should be constantly turned down, and have to wait several months or perhaps longer, before someone will give them a trial. I do hope therefore, that this article will contain for some people a little useful information, for I feel sure that many have not realized the capabilities of educated blind people, but as Canadians are doing so much in all other war connections, I am confident they will render assistance both by giving employment to the men, and money to the authorities who, I hope in the near future, will be endeavoring to carry on this noble work.

The writer of this article would be both pleased and willing to help any blind soldier with either the Braille reading and writing or shorthand and typing, for having had experience in teaching both, and possessing the necessary requirements, she would count it an honor to be able to assist any men who have made such a noble sacrifice for their King and Country. (Sgd.) DOROTHY V. HILL, 125 Bayle Street, Montreal.

Ed Note:—Miss Hill, who is blind herself is a living example of what an educated, blind person may accomplish. She is an accomplished pianist and vocalist, an excellent typist, and has taught in England.

SOME IMPORTED WORDS

Their use Here and their Meanings in Their Native Land.

You are so familiar with those three imported words, chauffeur, tonneau and limousine, that it would never occur to you to ask whether they really apply to the objects which they have been made to describe.

You know that a chauffeur is the man who is hired to drive a motorcar. The mere driving of the car is not the thing which gives the name its significance, for it does not apply to the owner of the car when he drives. In like manner you know that the tonneau is the part of the machine which is behind the driver's seat and accommodates three or five persons. When the possessor of an automobile is sufficiently opulent he has a limousine body for winter use, and probably it is electric heated and has a bunch of fresh flowers in the wall vase every morning.

To these vocables, with their small of greenbacks and their rattle of silks we might add another, even more suggestive of the expenditure of money and the word "hangar," which was dragged into the language when the glided youth wearied of sixty horse power speed and took to the air.

Would you be shocked to learn that a hangar, in rural France, where aeroplanes are almost unknown, is nothing but a shed for the farm cart? And what of the chauffeur? The high school girl was horrified to find by consulting her dictionary, that he was either a fireman or a braggart. Almost as disconcerting was the revelation that a "tonneau" was nothing but a vat or a tub. But the cruellest blow of all fell when the limousine was shown up as rough gopakain, worn by peasants near Limoges.

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Real Estate for Sale

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Players of the Boston and Brooklyn Baseball teams sliced a juicy melon when nearly \$163,000 was divided among the men who took part in the world's series won by the Red Sox. According to the official figures the wearers of the lurid hose shared \$97,756.47, while the Dodgers because of their inability to cope successfully with the American League and world's champions, had to be content with \$65,170.96.

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